

## Effects of proposed N.C. wind farm are questioned

By Jeff Hampton  
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KITTY HAWK, N.C.

A proposed wind farm off the North Carolina coast has people wondering about its future impact. About 50 people came to a public meeting in Kitty Hawk on Monday with questions ranging from whether fishing would be allowed near the towering turbines to whether the venture would provide jobs.

Five companies have expressed interest in building a wind farm off the Outer Banks or Wilmington. The entire Kitty Hawk area would support about 500 turbines.

The meeting was held to focus on the environmental impact of preliminary tests to gauge whether a wind farm would be feasible and provide enough power. But concerns revolved around the future wind farm itself.

Among the questions posed at the forum:

*Would the turbine field ever expand inland?*

Not likely. If it did, the entire process would have to begin again, said Brian Krevor, an environmental protection specialist and coordinator for the studies required under the National Environmental Policy Act.

*Could fishermen get close to the towers where the catch might be good?*

The Coast Guard would determine that, but the agency has not demanded restrictions so far, he said.

*Would there be jobs available for local people?*

Typically, the companies have or build facilities close to the ports they operate from, such as Norfolk, Krevor said.

*Would it affect the tourism industry?*

Wind turbines would be seen on clear days, but a future environmental study would address that problem.

*What happens if the power company runs out of money and hundreds of turbines sit off the coast unused?*

The company building the towers must put up a bond to cover the cost of decommissioning the farm, he said.

A federal study done in advance of building an offshore wind farm showed that surveys, tests and possible construction of a meteorological tower off the Kitty Hawk coast would have minimal impact on the environment. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management conducted an environmental assessment of the preliminary work and is presenting it to the public for comment.

Scientists and crews will take roughly 2,000 boat trips, mostly from Norfolk, to the area 24 nautical miles from the Outer Banks over the next five years. The job includes setting up a meteorological tower, buoys or both and taking core samples of the bottom, scooping up organisms along the sea floor, and counting birds and marine mammals. The tower would stand between 300 and 400 feet high and record wind speeds, temperatures, barometric pressure, currents and waves.

The results of the tests will determine whether the 122,405-acre patch of ocean would be effective for generating wind power. Private firms will depend on the study to get financing, said Krevor. An auction for the rights to build and operate a wind farm is expected in 2016.

Jeff Hampton, 252-338-0159, [jeff.hampton@pilotonline.com](mailto:jeff.hampton@pilotonline.com)